# Critical events in the life trajectories of domestic extremist white supremacist groups

## A case study analysis of four violent organizations

**Joshua D. Freilich**

*John Jay College of Criminal Justice*
*National Consortium for the Studies of Terrorism*
*and Responses to Terrorism (START)*

**Steven M. Chermak**

*Michigan State University*
*National Consortium for the Studies of Terrorism*
*and Responses to Terrorism (START)*

**David Caspi**

*John Jay College of Criminal Justice*
*National Consortium for the Studies of Terrorism*
*and Responses to Terrorism (START)*

### Research Summary

*This study examines the evolution of four domestic far-right racist organizations: Aryan Nations, National Alliance, Public Enemy Number 1 (PEN1), and Oklahoma Constitutional Militia (OCM). Information about the groups was compiled through open-source documents, including scholarly, government, watch-group, and media accounts. We compared the changes that occurred in these organizations and found that they were influenced by contextual and organizational variables. We focused primarily on the rise of the groups. Three organizations experienced growth and longevity because they (1) had able leadership that set forth a clear ideological message and goals, (2) undertook concrete actions to advance their ideology and goals as well as had the finances necessary for this, (3) took advantage of political opportunities, and (4) were internally cohesive. Conversely,*

*the OCM's leader displayed poor judgment, and the group did not set forth a coherent message, conduct successful actions, or take advantage of opportunities. The OCM neither grew nor amounted to an important extremist organization. We also examined the fall of the organizations. Three groups declined because of organizational instability and/or responses by law enforcement and nonstate actors, such as watch groups. PEN1—despite periodic internal debates about its mission—has avoided organizational instability and continues to grow.*

### Policy Implications

*Law-enforcement analysts must consider how critical incidents affect a group and account for organizational level variables that denote the group's strength. Understanding these organizations is like hitting a moving target. Analysts must engage in dynamic analyses because changes in the factors outlined above may cause a group to increase or decrease in strength and potential to commit violent acts. Although law-enforcement (and watch-group) responses can eliminate violent groups, authorities must be conscious of possible backlash effects. Law enforcement should use harsh responses only as a last resort. Simultaneous with police and watch-group actions, the government should reassure noncriminal movement members that their rights will be protected and encourage them to join the political process. Anti-extremist strategies should challenge the groups' ideologies and stress that violence will not be tolerated. Strategies that prevent the crimes these groups commit (e.g., situational crime prevention) could disrupt the groups, preempt harsh police responses, and thus avoid possible backlash effects. Finally, the authorities should focus on all criminal activities—including terrorist strikes and nonviolent and nonideological crimes—these organizations commit. This strategy could expand our theoretical explanations for group differences and help law enforcement establish priorities for responding to and preventing future terrorist activities.*

### Keywords

This study examines the evolution of four racist far-right domestic organizations: [1] Aryan Nations, National Alliance, Public Enemy Number 1 (PEN1), and Oklahoma Constitutional Militia (OCM). Although all the groups are racist and antigovernment, they differ in their beliefs, religions, and criminal activities. We focus primarily on the rise of the groups. Three organizations grew significantly, whereas OCM did not and was viewed as a fringe group by most movement members. OCM serves as an ideal comparison group for documenting factors critical to the rise of racist extremist organizations. We also examine the fall of the organizations. Three groups declined, but PEN1 has not and continues to grow. PEN1 serves as a comparison group for documenting factors critical to the fall of far-right racist groups. These differences matter because they reveal different threat levels necessary for terrorism or violent crime, as well as suggest different law-enforcement policies when confronting these groups (Duffy and Brantley, 1998).

It is important to investigate such groups because, although international terrorist groups like Al Qaeda threaten public safety, the far right also poses a serious threat. Freilich, Chermak, and Simone's (in press; see also Riley, Treverton, Wilson, and Davis, 2005) survey of state police agencies (in which 37 states, or 74%, returned surveys) found that more responding states reported the presence of far-right militia (92%), neo-Nazi (89%), and racist skinheads (89%) in their jurisdictions than Islamic Jihadi extremists (65%). Other studies indicate that domestic attacks outnumber international attacks in the United States by 7 to 1 (LaFree, Dugan, Fogg, and Scott, 2006), and that the far right represents a danger to domestic security (Chermak, 2002; Freilich, Pichardo-Almanzar, and Rivera, 1999; Hewitt, 2003).

Freilich and Chermak's (2008; see also Chermak, Freilich, and Shemtob, in press; Gruenewald et al., in press) ongoing U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) study has identified more than 4,300 criminal events, which include more than 275 homicide incidents committed by far rightists since 1990. This study is unique because, unlike most research that focuses on a narrow range of "terrorist" incidents, the ECDB examines any crime committed by at least one far rightist. The ECDB tracks violent and nonviolent, as well as ideological and nonideological,

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1.  Defining the domestic far right is not easy because no universally accepted definition exists and prior research has not sufficiently addressed this issue. Drawing from our systematic review of studies (Gruenewald, Freilich, and Chermak, in press) published on far-right extremism in general and its association with political crimes in particular—including important works that offer typologies, definitions, and descriptions (see, e.g., Barkun, 1990; Berlet and Lyons, 2000; Coates, 1987; Duffy and Brantley, 1998; Durham, 2003; Kaplan, 1993, 1996; Mullins, 1988; Smith, 1994; Sprinzak, 1998; see also Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997; Weinberg, 1993)—we rely on the following description. The domestic far right is composed of individuals or groups that subscribe to aspects of these ideals: They are fiercely nationalistic (as opposed to universal and international in orientation), antiglobal, suspicious of centralized federal authority, reverent of individual liberty (especially their right to own guns and be free of taxes), believe in conspiracy theories that involve a grave threat to national sovereignty and/or personal liberty, believe that one's personal and/or national "way of life" is under attack and is either already lost or that the threat is imminent (sometimes such beliefs are amorphous and vague, but for some the threat is from a specific ethnic, racial, or religious group), and believe in the need to be prepared for an attack by participating in paramilitary preparations and training and survivalism. It is important to note that mainstream conservative movements and the mainstream Christian right are not included.

crimes. For example, both an antigovernment bombing committed by a militia group and a profit-motivated drug sale committed by neo-Nazi skinheads would be included in the database. The homicide incidents in the ECDB (ideologically motivated and nonideologically motivated) claimed more than 530 fatalities (and more than 360 fatalities when excluding the Oklahoma City bombing). More than 250 additional individuals (excluding the Oklahoma City bombing) were injured during these events. Far rightists killed more than 47 law-enforcement and private security personnel in the line of duty in more than 35 incidents. At least 22 far rightists were killed by law-enforcement personnel since 1990 (Freilich and Chermak, 2008).

We first discuss our selection of groups for analysis and comparison, the data we used to examine the groups, and our comparative case study method. Next, we examine the origins of the four organizations as well as the critical events that influenced their evolutions. Our discussion section uses the organizational, social movement, and terrorism literatures to place our findings in theoretical and empirical context. We conclude with a discussion of the policy implications of our findings.

## Selection of Groups, Data, and Method

We used Berlet and Vysotsky's (2006) typology that divides far-right organizations into three categories: religious, political, and youth cultural. One group was selected to represent each category (Aryan Nations, National Alliance, and PEN1) to assess different perspectives on the events of interest (Creswell, 2007; Snow and Trom, 2002). These groups are not a representative sample, but we were interested in uncovering factors related to groups becoming long lasting and successful. We therefore selected groups that lasted more than 20 years and at one point were either the leading racist group in the country or had one of the largest memberships in its category. We selected a fourth group (OCM) that was unsuccessful, small in number, and lasted only 1 year to serve as a "comparison" group. Ideally, we would have selected three unsuccessful groups (one in each category), but we limited ourselves due to space constraints. We also examined the decline of the groups. Three of the organizations declined, but because PEN1 has continued to grow, it serves as the comparison group for determining factors critical to the fall of far-right groups. We focused on only far-right racist groups. Future research should consider whether our findings apply to other ideological groups, such as far leftists or single-issue extremists (e.g., anti-abortion or animal- or environmental-rights extremists). We describe the four groups we selected below.

### Groups Selected

Religious white supremacist groups endorse a spiritual belief system and require their members and supporters to practice the religion (Berlet and Vysotsky, 2006). These groups use religion to justify their racist ideology and are led by leaders with religious titles (Barkun, 1990, 1997). Such organizations construct the world into good (whites) versus evil (nonwhites and Jews) and believe that an apocalyptic war is inevitable. We selected the Aryan Nations to represent the

religious category because it has existed for more than 20 years and it was the preeminent racist group in the mid-to-late 1980s (Balch, 2006; Wakin, 2004). Although leaders of the Aryan Nations ran for political office, the group emphasized religion (Berlet and Vysotsky, 2006) and its leader, Butler, was a Christian Identity pastor. The group's religious interpretations promote violence against Jews, minorities, and the government (Hoffman, 1995).

Political white supremacist groups endorse neo-Nazi ideology and favor an authoritarian government. These groups espouse "traditional values"; categorize individuals into "in groups" and "out groups" based on race, religion, or citizenship; and delegitimize the out group. Political groups seek to overthrow the government (Berlet and Vysotsky, 2006) and they spread their message by distributing literature and organizing rallies (Berbrier, 2000; Blazak, 2001; Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk, 2006). We chose the National Alliance to represent the political category because it was the leading neo-Nazi organization in the 1990s and it has existed for more than three decades (Gardell, 2003; Michael, 2003b). The group seeks to replace the government with a national socialist regime. Although William Pierce, the group's founder, emphasized spirituality through his creation of Cosmotheism, belief in it was not required (Gardell, 2003). The National Alliance stresses Aryan superiority from an evolutionary standpoint. The group claims that Jews prevent Aryans from achieving their evolutionary destiny by promoting non-white immigration and multicultural policies (Whitsel, 1995).

Youth-cultural white supremacist groups stress subcultural affiliations that include listening to hate rock and black metal music, wearing a certain style of clothes, and displaying Nazi and white supremacist symbols. It also entails adopting a racist ideology and some members possess a willingness to use violence (Berlet and Vysotsky, 2006). Youth are exposed to this subculture through friends, hate rock concerts, and Internet sites (Blazak, 2001; Futrell et al., 2006; Hamm, 1993; Moore, 1993). The ideals and social norms are reinforced by older members. We selected PEN1 to represent the youth subculture category because it has existed for more than 20 years and is one of the largest skinhead groups currently operating in the United States (Simi, Smith, and Reeser, 2008). We therefore also use this group as a "control" group to compare with the three organizations that declined.

We selected a fourth group that never experienced growth to serve as a "control" group to compare with the groups that grew. We needed to find a group that—although unsuccessful—attracted the attention of open sources. We selected OCM because it lasted only 1 year, consisted of four members, and was unsuccessful in its criminal plans. However, the threat posed by the organization was large. The arrest and trial of the group's members attracted attention and we uncovered significant open-source materials on it. This group is also categorized as a religious organization because its members practiced Christian Identity. The organization was apocalyptic and believed that a Jewish cabal was conspiring to take over the United States and establish a new world order. The group's religious objectives guided their decision to commit violence through bombing certain government, Jewish, homosexual, and abortion targets.

*Data and Method*

We researched the four groups using 22 search engines (Lexis-Nexis; Proquest; Yahoo; Google; Copernic; News Library; Infotrac; Google Scholar; Amazon; Google U.S. Government; Federation of American Scientists; Google Video; Center for the Study of Intelligence; Surf Wax; Dogpile; Mamma; Librarians' Internet Index; Scirus; All the Web; Google News; Google Blog; and Homeland Security Digital Library) and we reviewed terrorism databases (e.g., the American Terrorism Study, the U.S. Extremist Crime Database Study, and the Global Terrorism Database), official sources (e.g., Federal Bureau of Investigation reports and congressional testimonies), and watch-group reports (e.g., Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center) to uncover detailed information on them. The information came from a variety of sources and increased the likelihood that there was no systematic bias operating either for or against the groups (Freilich and Pridemore, 2006, 2007). The resulting information comprised media accounts, government documents, court records, videos, blogs, books, watch-group reports, movement-produced materials, and scholarly accounts.

We used this information to complete case studies on each group, highlighting their ideology, structure, leadership, and membership. We were interested in how the groups changed over time, especially the critical incidents that affected their size and strength. We drafted a timeline of these factors and expanded the comparative historical research method to make comparisons across the organizations (Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth, 1992; see also Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). We explain our method in more detail in the Discussion section. We first examine the evolution of the four groups.

## Group Case Studies

*Religious Group: The Rise and Fall of the Aryan Nations*

The Aryan Nations was founded by Richard Girnt Butler in 1978 (Balch, 2006; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997). Butler was an aeronautical engineer from California and a U.S. Air Force veteran (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997). He became racially conscious as a result of his parents (Ezekiel, 1995) and he embraced white superiority after observing the caste system during World War II while being stationed in India (Aho, 1990; Ezekiel, 1995; Wakin, 2004). In the 1960s, Butler met Wesley Swift, a Christian Identity pastor (Balch, 2006). Butler commented that meeting Swift "was the total turning point in my life.… He had the answers I was trying to find" (Aho, 1990: 68). After Swift's death, Butler took over his church. In 1973, Butler purchased 20 acres near Hayden Lake, Idaho, and created his own Identity church. In 1978, after a few failed endeavors, Butler created the Aryan Nations to serve as his church's political arm (Balch, 2006).

The Aryan Nations grew quickly and, by the early-to-mid-1980s, was the preeminent white supremacist organization. The organization grew because its unchallenged leader set forth a clear ideological message, committed actions to further the ideology, took advantage of political openings, and kept the group unified. It was a religious group that espoused the theology

of Christian Identity: Aryans are the true chosen people, Jews are imposters—the offspring of the devil's union with Eve—and nonwhites are subhuman (Barkun, 1997). The Aryan Nations justified violence against the government and nonwhites. Importantly, it offered an action plan, the "10% solution," which refers to their goal of establishing a white-only homeland in the five states of the Northwest. Butler claimed that the 10% solution could be achieved by recruiting supporters in Idaho (and then Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Wyoming) to gain power (Balch, 2006).

The Aryan Nations undertook concrete actions to spread its message and achieve its goals. In July 1980, the group established the annual Aryan World Congresses (AWC) at its compound with the goal of attracting white separatists to move to the Northwest. The congresses focused on perceived injustices by affirmative action and multiculturalism to the white working class (Balch, 2006). Attendance grew from 200 AWC attendees in 1982 to 500 attendees in 1983 (Balch, 2006). AWC catapulted the Aryan Nations into a highly respected organization in the movement and helped recruit members (Moore, 1993). The group actively recruited from various segments of the racist far right (Aho, 1990; Balch, 2006; Dobratz and Shanks-Miele, 1997; Moore, 1993; Seymour, 1991; Smith, 1994), struggling farmers (Aho, 1990), and the incarcerated (Moore, 1993; Ridgeway, 1995; Smith, 1994).

The Aryan Nations took advantage of political opportunities such as the June 1983 killing of Gordon Kahl, a noted Christian Identity tax protestor. Kahl killed two law-enforcement agents who tried to arrest him. After months as a fugitive, he was surrounded by the authorities and became engaged in a shootout that killed a third officer and resulted in Kahl's own death. Many far rightists saw Kahl as a martyr and his death angered white racialists and radicalized elements of the Aryan Nations (Corcoran, 1990). The Aryan Nations capitalized on this and the largest AWC (i.e., 500 attendees) took place 1 month after Kahl's death in 1983. During this AWC, Robert Jay Mathews formed a group called "The Order" (also known as Brüders Schweigen—Silent Brotherhood) that consisted of members of the Aryan Nations and National Alliance (Flynn and Gerhardt, 1990; Hamm, 2007a; Martinez and Gunthier, 1999). Mathews formed the group to foment a revolution and obtain funds for various racist organizations (Balch, 2006; Gardell, 2003; Ridgeway, 1995). Government documents suggest that Mathews was encouraged to form The Order by Butler, as well as by the leading racists Louis Beam, Robert Miles, and Jim Ellison (Smith, personal communication, July 2008). The Order launched a crime spree consisting of a counterfeiting operation at the Aryan Nations compound, murder, and armored car robberies. These crimes garnered millions of dollars but the group was short lived: Mathews was killed in 1984 in a shootout with federal authorities and his followers were arrested (Dobratz and Shanks-Miele, 1997; Flynn and Gerhardt, 1990; Hamm, 2007a; Martinez and Gunthier, 1999; Schlatter, 2006). Law enforcement viewed The Order as an Aryan Nations spin off, which led to increased attention from government agents and resulted in Butler's prosecution for conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government (Balch, 2006).

Although the Aryan Nations rose to the top of the white supremacist movement in the 1980s, it declined during the late 1980s and 1990s because of internal dissension and actions taken against it by law enforcement and watch groups. First, although the AWC played a part in the group's rise, it eventually undermined the organization. The cohesion of the Aryan Nations unraveled when skinheads and neo-Nazis began to attend congresses in the late 1980s. The skinheads and neo-Nazis were young, male, and partial to alcohol, drugs, and violence. They brought an unpredictability that made many residents of the compound uncomfortable and their presence also increased law-enforcement interest in the group (Balch, 2006). The initial core of families that lived on Butler's compound moved away, causing disorganization within the group. The emphasis on Nazism drove away nonresident Christian Identity adherents. Less than half of the Identity faithful who attended the 1987 AWC also attended the 1988 congress (Seymour, 1991). The instability was exacerbated by the Aryan Nations being a poor organization that received income from membership dues and some merchandising, never collected more than $100,000 in a year, and could not provide compensation for most staff positions (Balch, 2006). Consequently, Butler's inner circle changed frequently, which undermined the group's stability.

Another critical factor was the attention the Aryan Nations received from law enforcement because of the group's crimes and conflicts with the police (Balch, 2006), which caused suspicion and mistrust among members (Seymour, 1991). Subsequent terrorist and criminal activities by those associated with the Aryan Nations (i.e., The Order II and The Aryan Republican Army) only increased law enforcement's interest in the group and consequently the paranoia among its members. Indeed, the Aryan Nations experienced difficulty drawing people to their annual congresses because Butler's compound was thought to be infiltrated by government agents as well as by hidden microphones and cameras (Balch, 2006; Gardell, 2003). The Aryan Nations limped through the 1990s with even fewer members and smaller annual congresses (Balch, 2006). The final blow came in 1998 when Victoria Keenan and her son were assaulted and shot at by Aryan Nation guards when their car backfired while they drove on a road near the group's compound. This incident led to a lawsuit brought by the Southern Poverty Law Center on behalf of the Keenans that resulted in a $6.3 million judgment against Butler and the Aryan Nations that bankrupted the group. Butler was forced to sell the 20-acre compound to help satisfy the judgment (Michael, 2003b). The civil suit also introduced greater dissension within the organization.

Though Butler continued to organize the AWC (on available camp grounds) and to run the Aryan Nations from a small home in Idaho purchased for him by wealthy sympathizers, attendance continued to fall (Balch, 2006). In August 2001, Butler appointed Harold Ray Redfeairn as the new leader of the Aryan Nations. Redfeairn, along with August Kreis III (former propaganda minister), attempted to lead the group away from Butler and Butler expelled them. Redfeairn subsequently returned to Butler's Aryan Nations. Kreis, however, led the Aryan Nations chapter in Lexington, South Carolina (Cable News Network, 2005). After Redfeairn

died in 2003 and Butler died in 2004, two competing Aryan Nations emerged. One is led by August Kreis (now located in Florida), and a second is led by Jonathan Williams in Alabama. Both organizations remain small, and each claims to be the true continuation of the Aryan Nations (Schlatter, 2006).[2]

*Political Group: The Rise and Fall of the National Alliance*

William Luther Pierce III founded the National Alliance in 1974 in Washington, DC. Pierce had been a physics professor at Oregon State University from 1962 to 1965 (Whitsel, 1995), when he became alarmed by increasing immigration and civil rights advances that he saw as Jewish-created problems (Gardell, 2003; Michael, 2003a). He read books about Aryan genetic superiority (Griffin 2001; Whitsel, 1995) and joined the John Birch Society, though he left because of its unwillingness to embrace anti-Semitism (Whitsel, 1995). Pierce moved to Washington, DC, in 1966 and became the editor of George Rockwell's American Nazi Party's publication, *National Socialist World* (Gardell, 2003; Michael, 2003a; Smith, 1994; Whitsel, 1995). Pierce left the organization in 1970 (Michael, 2003a) and joined Willis Carto's National Youth Alliance but soon left because of personality conflicts (Whitsel, 1995). Pierce created the National Alliance in 1974 (Michael 2003a; Whitsel, 1995).

The National Alliance did not grow until the 1990s. The group rose because Pierce—who was a strong leader—set forth a coherent ideology, committed acts to extend that ideology, took advantage of political opportunities, and kept the group unified. Pierce was a prolific writer and was known as an ideologue within the movement (Griffin, 2001; Michael, 2003a; Whitsel, 1995). He set forth his group's neo-Nazi political views in many venues, but his most meaningful statement was a widely circulated novel. In 1978, Pierce self-published *The Turner diaries*, which was a novel authored under the pseudonym Andrew McDonald (Michael, 2003b). *The Turner diaries* involves a protagonist, Earl Turner, who launched a violent white revolution against the U.S. government. This revolution resulted in a race war in North America and the extermination of nonwhites. Pierce chose fiction to present his views because he thought it would reach a wider audience and have a bigger impact than a dry political pamphlet (Griffin, 2001).

Importantly, the influence of the novel grew over time. Each time the perpetrators of serious acts of violence were linked to the novel, Pierce's ideological message and action plan received extensive media coverage (Smith, 1994). This increased the National Alliance's popularity and influence. The British newspaper, the *Guardian,* reported that approximately 500,000 copies of *The Turner diaries* had been sold and that sales were strongly boosted as a result of the 1995 Oklahoma bombing (Sutherland, 2000). Indeed, Timothy McVeigh was a big fan of *The Turner diaries* and was carrying passages in his car when driving away from the scene of that bombing

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2.    However, these two Aryan Nations differ. Williams's Aryan Nations is more attached to the Christian Identity faith. Kreiss's organization is less religious and openly praises Islamic terrorists and Osama bin Laden. Williams disagrees with this viewpoint and commented that whereas, "I sympathize with Arabs, yes, sympathize because their lands have been stolen by Jews…we have nothing for them [Arabs]. The simple fact is that they aren't white" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2006).

(Cable News Network, 1997). Mathews used Pierce's novel as a blueprint for the actions of The Order during the 1980s (Whitsel, 1995). Similarly, Pierce's novel influenced David Copeland's (the "London Nail-bomber") bombing spree in 1999 (Michael, 2003a).

The popularity of *The Turner diaries* increased awareness of Pierce's other ideological writings. In the essay "Who rules America," Pierce asserted that the Jews use their control of the mass media to promote individualism and prevent whites from pursuing their interests (Michael, 2003b; Natvan, 2004). According to Pierce, the first step in the revolution was to reeducate white U.S. citizens (Michael, 2003a). He therefore took concrete action and created his own publishing company, National Vanguard Books, in 1987. This company expanded from selling books and tabloids to selling cassettes and videos and was vital to the rise of the National Alliance because it promulgated the group's message and raised its exposure within the white supremacist movement. Significantly, the company generated income that allowed the group to undertake additional activities (Anti-Defamation League, 2005b).[3] It influenced Pierce's decision to purchase record production companies, such as Resistance Records in the 1990s. The National Alliance used these companies to disseminate its message to, and increase its membership from, skinhead and neo-Nazi youth (Anti-Defamation League, 2005a; Notable Names Database, 2008; Prejudice Institute, 2005). The record companies helped the group generate a yearly income of $1 million or more (Anti-Defamation League, 2000).

The National Alliance also took advantage of political opportunities. The decline of the Aryan Nations—then the leading racist group—in the late 1980s provided an opening for Pierce in the 1990s. Like other far-right groups, the National Alliance also profited from the Waco and Ruby Ridge incidents, fears over government heavy handedness, and concerns about gun rights throughout the 1990s (Wright, 2007). Finally, the last critical factor in the group's rise was its strong internal cohesion. According to the indictment against Miles, Butler, and Beam for seditious conspiracy, before he was killed, Mathews met with Pierce and gave him $50,000 (Smith, personal communication, July 2008). Shortly afterward in 1985, Pierce purchased 346 acres in Hillsboro, West Virginia, for $95,000 cash (Griffin, 2001; Hamm, 1993; Whitsel, 1995). Pierce used the land to create a communal home for members (Whitsel, 1995). Although the National Alliance did not recruit many whites to move to Hillsboro, it provided a place for the group's staff to live and work. The compound enabled the National Alliance to remain stable and to develop its businesses while keeping costs low, which created a profitable organization. Pierce's leadership kept the group unified. Pierce surrounded himself with intelligent people and, based on his experience with Rockwell's American Nazi Party, he avoided hiring uneducated skinheads. Instead Pierce hired educated professionals (Griffin, 2001). He strictly enforced the rules of the organization and made sure there were no factions within the group. Under Pierce's leadership, the National Alliance was a well-funded, stable organization that grew from a few members in the 1970s to 2,500 members from at least 30 states in 2000 (Anti-Defamation League, 2005b; Building Democracy, 2002; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2002).

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3.    Initially, the group had little money and Pierce relied on his wife's income (Griffin, 2001).

Pierce's death and subsequent internal strife caused the fall of the National Alliance. After Pierce's death, Erich "The Aryan Barbarian" Gliebe became chairman of the national organization (Baysinger 2006; Michael, 2003b) and chief executive officer of Resistance Records (Prejudice Institute, 2005). Soon after, conflict developed among Gliebe and others over financial and other matters (Baysinger, 2006; Jabpage, 2003). Gliebe fired Billy Roper, deputy membership coordinator (Michael, 2003b; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2003), who went on to create a new group: White Revolution. In 2005, Kevin Alfred Strom, another leading member, resigned in order to found a group called National Vanguard (Newsgroups, 2006). Strom was soon arrested and pled guilty to a non-movement-related child pornography crime (Freilich and Chermak, 2008). In June 2006, Gliebe resigned and appointed Shaun Walker to succeed him (Anti-Defamation League, 2005c). But Walker's reign was short lived because he was convicted of civil rights violations and was sentenced to 87 months in prison (Freilich and Chermak, 2008). Gliebe returned to lead the National Alliance.

Actions by the Southern Poverty Law Center (a watch group) and law enforcement added to the National Alliance's troubles. Shortly after Pierce's death, the watch group published tapes of a secret meeting in which Pierce referred to other white supremacist groups as "freaks," "weaklings," and "human morons" (Rab, 2006). As word spread throughout the movement, skinheads and neo-Nazis—which compose the largest segment of Resistance Records' customer base—began to boycott the National Alliance and its record production company. During this time, the National Alliance became a poor organization with only a handful of staffers and less than 300 dues-paying members (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2006).

*Youth Culture Group: The Rise of PEN1*
PEN1 grew out of the punk rock scene in Long Beach and Huntington Beach in Southern California during the 1980s. Youth were attracted by the music, drugs, alcohol, fashion, and the beliefs and symbols of neo-Nazism (e.g., swastikas). By the mid 1980s, one group of young whites evolved into a gang, "Rudimentary PEN1," which was named after a punk band. Other than the name, the band had no link to the gang. PEN1 was also formed to protect white youths from minority gangs in neighborhoods that were changing demographically (Simi et al., 2008). Many of PEN1's initial members had time, money, and a desire to emulate the skinheads from England (Anti-Defamation League, 2007; Edds, 2008; Good, 2007; Moxley, 2007). Two influential leaders emerged: Brody Davis, who wanted PEN1 to be a white supremacist organization that rejected drug use and nonideological crimes; and Donald Reed "Popeye" Mazza, who although he was an ideological racist, favored committing profit-motivated crimes such as drug trafficking. Mazza won control of PEN1 and charted its course (Anti-Defamation League, 2007; Moxley, 2007).

PEN1 has grown into one of the largest skinhead groups in the country (Anti-Defamation League, 2007; Edds, 2008; Good, 2007; Moxley, 2007; Simi et al., 2008). PEN1's rise can be attributed to its clear goals, able leadership, ongoing criminal activities, internal cohesion, and political opportunism. First, PEN1's consistent white supremacist belief system and focus on

nonideological profit-motivated crimes distinguishes it from other white gangs. (Other gangs are either nonracist and are profit motivated or they only focus on extending white supremacist ideology.) PEN1 has not wavered from its path despite periodic debates during the last 20 years about whether it should focus only on profit-seeking crimes or solely advance white supremacist ideology (Simi et al., 2008). In short, PEN1 has remained a racist gang and, although it commits ideological hate crimes (Freilich and Chermak, 2008), it is primarily engaged in profit-motivated crimes (Freilich and Chermak, 2008; Simi et al., 2008). Relatedly, PEN1 has remained a centralized organization and, as discussed below, this is one reason the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang chose to work with it.

PEN1 also took advantage of political opportunities. During PEN1's early years, the Aryan Brotherhood—the leading white neo-Nazi prison gang—was identified as a prison gang by prison authorities and was isolated in special housing units throughout the system. This isolation forced the Aryan Brotherhood to cooperate with the Nazi Low Riders, which is another white racist gang. Because the Nazi Low Riders were not yet labeled a prison gang, they were placed in the general prison population and were able to conduct criminal business both inside and outside the prison system. However, during the 1990s, the Nazi Low Riders also were identified as a prison gang and were thus isolated in special housing units. During this time, an increasing number of PEN1 members entered the prison system after being convicted of various crimes (e.g., drug trafficking, identity theft, and murder). Because PEN1 was not labeled a prison gang by prison authorities, they filled the void left by the Nazi Low Riders. The Aryan Brotherhood also selected PEN1 to assist with its criminal operations because PEN1 "traditionally maintained a small and relatively cohesive leadership" (Simi et al., 2008: 762). The relationship between PEN1 and the Aryan Brotherhood strengthened when PEN1's leader, Donald Mazza, and second-in-command, Dominic Rizzo, were made Aryan Brotherhood "associates" (Anti-Defamation League, 2007; Edds, 2008; Good, 2007; Moxley, 2007; Simi et al., 2008).

These developments enhanced PEN1's clout within the prison system. The group increased its criminal operations, which meant more PEN1 members entering the prison system (Anti-Defamation League, 2001, 2007; Edds, 2008; Good, 2007; Moxley, 2007; Simi et al., 2008). As PEN1's criminal enterprises expanded beyond drug trafficking to auto theft, burglary, property crime, and identity theft, so did its membership base and geographic range, which in turn provided more potential recruits. Recruiting within the prison system became easier and the group has expanded its criminal enterprises by collaborating with other groups, including those with Latino members. Because of PEN1's reputation and growing size, many white inmates joined PEN1 to acquire protection from other ethnic and criminal gangs within the prison system. By 2002, PEN1's membership reached approximately 200 known members. By 2005, the estimate had grown to 400 and some law-enforcement and prison officials believed that the true number might be double that. In 2004, the California Department of Justice reported that PEN1 is "one of the most powerful and fastest-growing gangs inside and outside prison" (Associated Press 2006: 2; see also Anti-Defamation League, 2007; Edds, 2008; Freilich and Chermak, 2008; Good, 2007, Moxley, 2007; Simi et al., 2008).

*Control Group: The Fall of the OCM (Universal Church of God)*

Willie Ray Lampley formed the OCM in 1994. Unlike the groups discussed above—which at times had hundreds or thousands of members—the OCM consisted of only four people: Willie Lampley, his wife Cecilia, Larry Wayne Crow, and John Dare (J.D.) Baird (Ferguson, 1995; Fink, 1995; Pitcavage, 2001; Swindell, 1995). Lampley was a follower of Christian Identity who created a church in 1975 called the Universal Church of God and referred to himself as "Prophet of the Most High" of the church (de Armond, 1996). In the 1980s and early 1990s, he published a magazine and wrote letters to politicians, such as the governors of California and Idaho, warning them that their state was noncompliant with God's law and threatening violence if they did not change course (Anti-Defamation League, 1995).

A significant amount of open-source information is available about the arrest and conviction of the members of the OCM. The organization's four members were racist and strongly opposed to the federal government. The two key figures—Lampley (the group's primary actor) and Crow—met and became partners because of their shared religious viewpoints. They attended militia gatherings together, shared racist literature, discussed ideology, and publicized their views through newsletters and the Internet. The OCM lasted for approximately 1 year and had a birth and a death, but no significant rise. The group was negatively affected by Lampley's lack of leadership ability and criminal sophistication, a convoluted ideological message, and law-enforcement tactics taken in response to the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

Lampley had poor organizational leadership skills: He was not a shrewd manager and he was unable to attract a wide following or engage leaders of other groups. Most extremists who came in contact with Lampley shunned him. John Parsons, who was the leader of a national militia umbrella organization called the Tri-States Militia (as well as an FBI informant) said, "I thought Lampley was a complete nut case, and everyone else looked at him the same way." Other militia members stated that he "spooked even the militia" (Foster, 1996: 2). Lampley also lacked criminal sophistication. In the months after the Oklahoma City bombing, Lampley visited various militia and white supremacist organizations to discuss his bombing plans and to seek support, but instead he was rebuffed (Swindell, 1996). Lampley ignored the fact that law-enforcement officials were interested in militias (especially those that used the Internet to disseminate hateful ideology and recruit new members) after the Oklahoma City bombing (see Sageman, 2008, on the importance of the Internet to the recruitment and radicalization processes). He attempted to harness the Internet's power by posting messages designed to spread his racist rhetoric and recruit individuals to his plot.

Relatedly, the ideological messages set forth by Lampley were unclear and did not attract supporters. For example, in one Internet message illustrative of his worldview, he emphasized that war was necessary to purge the government out of "his America."[4] He claimed that he was one of God's prophets sent to warn others of the impending war and to take the necessary steps

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4. See albionmonitor.com/12-3-95/lampleypost.html.

to ensure victory. In convoluted reference to Christian Identity teachings, Lampley argued that America is the "land of Ephraim"—essentially, white America—and that Yahweh, the Elohim God of Israel, do not want to go to war but existing sources of evil ensure that war is inevitable. Lampley's lack of discretion and chosen means of disseminating his unclear message made him visible to law enforcement.

Concurrent with Lampley's unwise actions, law enforcement increased the amount of attention and resources devoted to right-wing extremist organizations, especially militias (Chermak, 2002). As a result of this increased attention, Lampley, his wife Cecilia, Baird, and Crow were arrested in November 1995 for conspiracy to manufacture and possess a destructive device. Richard Schrum, an undercover informant who volunteered to work for the FBI after the Oklahoma City bombing, had infiltrated Lampley's militia and secretly recorded conversations (Fink, 1995; Swindell, 1996). Lampley and the others planned on using ammonium nitrate fertilizer bombs to blow up offices of the Anti-Defamation League and Southern Poverty Law Center, abortion clinics, civil rights offices, welfare offices, and gay bars. Law-enforcement officers seized numerous guns and three semiautomatic weapons when making the arrests. It is possible that prior to the Oklahoma City bombing, Lampley and the OCM might have gone unnoticed but, in the months after McVeigh's actions, law enforcement was paying closer attention and Lampley's behavior made the group visible to investigators.

## Comparison and Discussion

Organizational theorists argue that it is difficult to identify the causes of group growth after it has occurred (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Whetten, 1987). To address this issue, we extended the comparative historical research method (Steinmo et al., 1992; see also Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). We isolated factors that seem to account for each group's rise, growth, and decline. We ensured that factors found to be responsible for a group's rise occurred before the group rose or before the rise accelerated. Similarly, factors responsible for the decline occurred before the decline began or before the decline increased. We listed the factors for each group and then compared the four organizations. We first focus on the rise of the groups.

### Growth of Groups

The Aryan Nations, National Alliance, and PEN1 were unique because they achieved considerable growth. Most terrorist and extremist groups do not grow, cannot sustain growth, and exist for less than 1 year (Jones and Libicki, 2008; LaFree and Dugan, in press; Rapoport, 1992). We recently examined all white supremacist organizations that the Southern Poverty Law Center's annual hate report listed as existing in the United States since 1990. Less than 5% of the 6,000 listed groups existed for at least 3 years (Freilich and Chermak, 2008). It is important to uncover the factors that fuel organizational growth.

Our analysis documented four factors that were critical to the rise of the Aryan Nations, National Alliance, and PEN1 but were not found in our examination of the OCM (the comparison group). The organization (1) was led by a strong leader with a clear ideological agenda,

(2) pursued activities to expand its goals and had the necessary finances, (3) strategically took advantage of political opportunities, and (4) was cohesive. Although we discuss these critical factors separately, they interact. We outline them sequentially, however, as a heuristic device.

*Leadership and ideology.* A strong leader is determined, committed, provides an ideology that justifies certain beliefs or actions, and provides direction on how to achieve the group's goals (Richardson, 2006; Stern, 2003). All three successful organizations were led by strong leaders who set forth clear ideologies or goals, whereas the unsuccessful OCM leader's ideological writings were "convoluted." Table 1 illustrates this.

### T A B L E  1

### Leadership and ideology

| | Aryan Nations | National Alliance | PEN1 | OCM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Critical factor responsible for group's growth or continued growth and when it occurred* | Butler set forth clear ideological message: Christian Identity theology as well as the 10% action plan in 1978 | Pierce set forth a clear ideological message: Pierce's neo-Nazi message received increased attention throughout the 1980s (because of high profile crimes it inspired) | PEN1 has a small cohesive leadership and clear goals: Endorses white supremacist beliefs and focuses on profit crimes (while also engaging in hate crimes) throughout the 1990s and the new millennium | Lampley was perceived as a "nut" Ideology was "convoluted," and Lampley's writing (in the 1980s and early 1990s) consisted of rants and threats |
| *When group began to rise or continued to rise* | Rose in the early and mid 1980s | Rose throughout the 1990s | Rose in late 1990s and especially 2000+ | Never rose |

Notes. PEN1 = Public Enemy Number 1. OCM = Oklahoma Constitutional Militia.

The Aryan Nations was Butler's brainchild and Pierce was the sole founder of the National Alliance. PEN1 did not find its focus until Mazza took control and currently its leadership is small and cohesive. Butler formed the Aryan Nations in 1978 and promulgated Christian Identity claims that whites are locked in an apocalyptical cosmic battle with the devil (Jews) and subhuman nonwhites. More practically, Butler offered the 10% solution that called for the establishment of a white-only homeland in the Pacific Northwest. The Aryan Nations began to grow and attendance at its AWC increased in the early and mid 1980s (Goodrick-Clark, 2002; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2004). Pierce was a strong leader who consistently provided explanations, justifications, and direction. He advocated revolution, a white-only homeland, and he sought to institute a national socialist government. Pierce's message received increased attention throughout the 1980s owing to crimes it inspired. The National Alliance began to grow in the 1990s.

PEN1 embraced white supremacy and parroted the famous statement, "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children," which was coined by David Lane (member of The Order). Although PEN1 did not primarily pursue ideological goals, its members

committed violent hate crimes (Freilich and Chermak, 2008). Importantly, the group's mission has consistently focused on profit-motivated crimes since its inception. The group's growth accelerated after 2000. Conversely, although Lampley embraced Christian Identity, his ideological utterances were usually incomprehensible. Most of Lampley's writings were rants and threats against politicians. The OCM never grew but instead remained a four-person group.

### T A B L E   2

### Concrete actions and financial stability

| | Aryan Nations | National Alliance | PEN1 | OCM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Critical factor responsible for group's growth or continued growth and when it occurred* | Although the group was never wealthy, it had resources to host AWC to spread group's ideology and recruit members (first congress in 1980)

Community of families lived on compound (1980s)—further 10% plan

Order—associated with group—committed crimes in early 1980s | Ideology publicized in multiple venues (Turner diaries, pamphlets, talks, radio shows)—received increasing attention during the 1980s because of crimes it inspired

Group's book and record companies generated more than $1 million in income. These companies also allowed group to bypass "Jewish dominated media" | Founded to protect white youth in changing areas (in late 1980s and early 1990s)

Hate crimes and especially profit crimes increased in 1990s

Allied with AB in prison to protect white inmates and pursue crimes inside prison (late 1990s and the new millennium) | Lampley was shunned by others and his group's terrorist plots were foiled

Other than Lampley's failed recruitment efforts in person and via the Internet, the group did not undertake concrete actions |
| *When group began to rise or continued to rise* | Rose in the early and mid 1980s | Rose throughout the 1990s | Rose in late 1990s and especially 2000+ | Never rose |

Notes. AWC = Aryan World Congress. AB = Aryan Brotherhood. PEN1 = Public Enemy Number 1. OCM = Oklahoma Constitutional Militia.

These findings are consistent with the social movement and terrorism literatures. Resource mobilization theory places a heavy premium on leadership skills in determining which movements or groups succeed (Zald and McCarthy, 1987). Stern (2003) concluded that terrorist leaders are fundamental to group success because they decide and justify the message and tactics, provide a sense of identity and purpose, and empower marginal followers (see also Hamm, 1993, 2002; Hewitt, 2003; Jurgensmeyer, 2000; Ruggiero, 2005; Smith, 1994). Relatedly, current social movement scholarship criticizes earlier approaches that refused to take the ideology of far-right groups seriously and dismissed their beliefs as irrational or unreasoned. Our finding that a clear ideological message is important for an organization's growth indicates that dismissing such views as irrational is unhelpful (Aho, 1990; Berlet and Lyons, 2000; Bruce, 1988; Freilich, 2003; Hixson, 1992). We expand on this point in the policy implications section.

*Concrete actions and financial stability.* All three successful groups conducted concrete activities to expand their goals and ideologies and had the finances necessary to undertake these steps. This approach is illustrated in Table 2.

Some white supremacists—like Robert Mathews and members of The Order—believed most movement members were long on rhetoric but short on action (Gardell, 2003; Schlatter, 2006). An active group reflects seriousness and commitment. The Aryan Nations organized its first annual congress in 1980 to unite the fractious white supremacist movement. Some Aryan Nations members moved to the compound to live (thereby extending the group's 10% plan). A cohesive community was living at the compound in the mid 1980s. The Aryan Nations seemed to be committed to the cause, as individuals associated with it perpetrated serious crimes to spread their ideology (e.g., The Order in the early 1980s). The Aryan Nations took steps to attract young members (Moore, 1993) and recruited members in prison. Again, the group rose in the mid-to-late 1980s.

The National Alliance demonstrated activity largely through organizational achievements. Pierce published his message in books, tabloids, newsletters; created a publishing company; purchased record companies; hosted a weekly radio program; and spoke at white supremacist gatherings both in the United States and abroad. The National Alliance organized protests and rallies. Although Pierce had little respect for young skinheads, he recruited youth by purchasing Resistance Records and other companies. Pierce increased these activities in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Again, the group's ideology and activities received increased attention as a result of the publicized crimes it inspired. These activities were fundamental to its growth and made it the premier white supremacist organization of the 1990s.

Since its creation in the late 1980s, PEN1 has pursued illicit profits and committed murder and other crimes to advance its objectives. Initially, it protected white youth in demographically changing areas and focused on profit crimes throughout the 1990s. As more of its members were arrested, greater numbers of PEN1 members entered California prisons in the 1990s. Thus. PEN1 has been active behind bars, especially since 2000. Prisons offer an ideal environment for recruitment because protection can be offered in exchange for support. In contrast, Lampley and the OCM were unable to undertake any successful activities: Both their recruitment efforts and terrorist plots failed because of poor leadership, messaging, and recruiting skills.

The three successful groups' activities and growths were made possible because they had sufficient funds to conduct these activities. The more money the organization possesses, the more capable it is. Before Pierce's death, the National Alliance was earning more than $1 million per year. Although the Aryan Nations was not as financially successful, it earned enough in the 1980s to organize annual congresses. PEN1 may be more profitable than the other organizations, but the money has typically been used for criminal schemes and personal income.

These findings are congruent with prior research. Ruggiero (2005) stated that members of the Red Brigades engaged in activities to distinguish themselves and to thereby achieve greater status (see also Friedman and McAdam, 1992; Hamm, 2007a; Sageman, 2008). Relatedly, the Aryan

Nations and PEN1's recruitment efforts inside prisons mirror the activities of other extremist groups. The Black Liberation Army recruited inside prisons in the 1960s (Smith, 1994) and Al Qaeda might currently be recruiting members inside U.S. prisons (Hamm, 2007b). Finally, our finding that financially strong organizations were more active (which then aided their growth) is consistent with earlier studies. Stern (2003) found that finances are a necessary ingredient for a terrorist group's success: "Where there is money for Islamist causes but not communist ones, Islamist terrorist organizations will rise and communist ones will fail" (2003: 142; see also Dobrtatz and Shanks-Meile, 1997; Giraldo and Trinkunas, 2007; Hamm, 1993, 2002; Hewitt, 2003; Horgan, 2004; Horgan and Taylor, 1999; Jones and Libicki, 2008; Ruggiero, 1995; Sageman, 2008; Smith, 1994; Sprinzak, 1998; Zald and McCarthy, 1987).

## TABLE 3

### Political opportunities

| | Aryan Nations | National Alliance | PEN1 | OCM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Critical factor responsible for group's growth or continued growth and when it occurred* | Capitalized on anger about government heavy handedness, such as the death of Gordon Kahl (1983) | Capitalized on the decline of the Aryan Nations (late 1980s) and concerns about government abuses (e.g., Ruby Ridge 1992; Waco 1993) | Formed to protect whites in changing areas. Entered prison in growing numbers in late 1990s and 2000+<br><br>Capitalized on the AB and NLR being labeled prison gangs and isolated. This led to AB and PEN1 cooperation | Unable to take advantage of possible political openings<br><br>Lampley was shunned by others in the movement because he was viewed as crazy |
| *When group began to rise or continued to rise* | Rose in early and mid 1980s | Rose throughout 1990s | Rose in late 1990s and especially 2000+ | Never rose |

Notes. AB = Aryan Brotherhood. PEN1 = Public Enemy Number 1. NLR = Nazi Low Riders. OCM = Oklahoma Constitutional Militia.

*Political openings and opportunities.* A third factor common to the successful groups was that they took advantage of political opportunities. Table 3 documents savvy decisions the organizations made to take advantage of these openings.

Butler exploited the "martyrdom" of Gordon Kahl and Robert Mathews to benefit the growth of the Aryan Nations. Pierce—like many far-right groups—exploited Ruby Ridge and Waco in the 1990s (Wright, 2007) and took advantage of the decline of the Aryan Nations. *The Turner diaries* and his other writings brought high-profile publicity to the National Alliance. PEN1 also took advantage of political opportunities. It formed in the late 1980s to protect white youth in neighborhoods that were changing demographically. PEN1 has recently grown because of its alliance with the Aryan Brotherhood inside prisons. This collaboration occurred because PEN1 took advantage of the opening provided by prison authorities who classified the Brotherhood and the Nazi Low Riders as prison gangs and isolated them from the general

population. However, because of Lampley's poor leadership qualities, the OCM could not take advantage of any political openings. Rather, Lampley made efforts to recruit others and tap into the national patriot network, but he was shunned because he was viewed as "nuts." Lampley could not take advantage of the Internet to recruit either, because he posted convoluted writings that were unlikely to appeal to potential followers.

These findings are consistent with prior research. Whetten's (1987) review of literature on organizations' life cycles found that growth is critical for survival and is typically a by-product of other strategies. Some strategies are initiated by the organization, but often the group takes advantage of external events or chance happenings. McAdam's (1982) political process model in the social movement literature similarly found that changed power relations (such as that which occurred with PEN1 inside of California's prisons) create opportunities that groups can take advantage of. McAdam also noted that opportunities are related to "cognitive liberation," which is the creation of beliefs that "the current situation is unjust" (p. 19). Both the Aryan Nations and the National Alliance took advantage of alleged government heavy handedness to expand their groups. Furthermore, the recent decline of the National Alliance created opportunities for the growth of similar groups, such as the National Socialist Movement.

| TABLE 4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal cohesion** | | | |
| | **Aryan Nations** | **National Alliance** | **PEN1** | **OCM** |
| *Critical factor responsible for group's growth or continued growth and when it occurred* | Butler was unrivaled leader, and the group had no factions or internal disputes | Pierce was unrivaled leader who avoided internal strife by shunning "unruly" types and hiring professional types for senior positions | Despite periodic debates about the group's mission (i.e., racist ideology v. routine crimes), Mazza and the group's centralized leadership has so far successfully bridged these divides | Lampley made unwise decisions |
| | A united community lived at the group compound (early to mid-1980s) | Senior management lived in the group's compound (1980s and 1990s) | | Group was small—four people—but was undone by trusting a police informer—cohesion undermined |
| *When group began to rise or continued to rise* | Rose in early and mid 1980s | Rose in 1990s | Rose in late 1990s and especially 2004+ | Never rose |

Notes. PEN1 = Public Enemy Number 1. OCM = Oklahoma Constitutional Militia.

*Internal cohesion.* The final factor common to the rise of the successful groups is that they grew when they were cohesive and factions were kept to a minimum. This was again partially attributed to strong leadership exercised by Butler, Pierce, and Mazza, as observed in Table 4.

Butler initially surrounded himself with a stable inner core that followed his rules. Although this support ultimately changed, for many years, Butler was an unchallenged leader and the

group was unified. Pierce created a stable group and he surrounded himself with intelligent and capable people. He purposefully did not recruit unruly skinheads or other hotheads to key positions. Pierce enforced the rules and the National Alliance had no factions while he ruled. Although Mazza is imprisoned, he has managed to maintain a stable gang that is respected among white supremacist gangs—both within and outside of the California prison system. Although the group has periodic internal debates about its mission, its leadership remains small and cohesive (Simi et al., 2008). Furthermore, the group has been consistent in its activities and goals throughout the past two decades, which is precisely why the Aryan Brotherhood reached out to them.

Previous research found that cohesion is fundamental to group survival. Jamieson (1990) concluded that the Italian Red Brigades terrorist group survived as long as it did because it avoided infiltration and internal discord because most members followed the organization's rules (see also Horschem, 1989, 1991; Ruggiero, 2005; Sprinzak, 1998). Jones and Libicki's (2008: 40) recent RAND study that investigated 268 terrorist groups worldwide to determine why they ended found that "a terrorist group often has to become large to win. The inability to grow, conversely, is a harbinger of defeat. Splintering (or absorption into other groups) is a bane of small groups." Indeed, both the Aryan Nations and the National Alliance were created out of factional splits: Before Butler formed the Aryan Nations, he took over Swift's church; Pierce created the National Alliance after a conflict with Willis Carto (Hamm, 2007a; Hewitt, 2003; Smith, 1994; Sprinzak, 1998).

### Fall (Decline)

Although our main focus was on the factors responsible for group growth, we also investigated their decline. In this analysis, we treated PEN1 as our comparison group because it is the only organization examined that is still growing. The demise of a group seems to be a culmination of two broad factors that likely interact and encompass many circumstances: organizational instability and responses by government and nongovernment agencies. We discuss both points.

*Organizational instability.* All the groups except PEN1 experienced internal instability before their decline began. Table 5 illustrates this point. Instability is related to loss of leadership, loss of cohesive inner core, and loss of funds. Initially, Butler was surrounded by a close-knit group that shared common values. However, when he organized the AWC, this introduced a more militant element to the compound that did not share the same values as the inner core. Many members of the stable initial group then left. The skinhead presence also brought additional law-enforcement attention to the Aryan Nations, which increased dissension within the group. Eventually, Butler (who was older and in poor health) could not enforce the rules. Furthermore, the Aryan Nations could not afford to pay its staff and key personnel came and went, which destabilized the group even more. Butler was recognized as a failed leader and infighting began. Members left, created splinter organizations, or tried to take control of the

Aryan Nations. Currently, the Aryan Nations is split between two groups that claim to be the true descendent of Butler's organization and both have few members.

The National Alliance also suffered from organizational instability, but it happened in a different sequence. Pierce maintained a cohesive inner core until his death. Gliebe (Pierce's replacement) was not as capable as Pierce, and he could not earn the group's respect. Within a short period, infighting occurred and members left, created splinter groups, or tried to remove Gliebe. Business suffered and resulted in more staff leaving the organization. Today, the National Alliance is a shadow of its former self with just a few hundred members.

### TABLE 5

#### Organizational instability

| | Aryan Nations | National Alliance | PEN1 | OCM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Critical factors responsible for group's decline or continued decline and year each occurred* | Neo-Nazis began showing up at AWC—led to Christian Identity adherents leaving (late 1980s) | Pierce death—led to splintering of the group and power struggles (2002–2003) | Small cohesive leadership | Trusted an informant—led to the group's demise (1994) |
| | AWC attracted unruly skinheads and core families left (late 1980s) | | Despite periodic debates over the last two decades, it has consistently embraced profit crimes and white supremacy | |
| | Heavy turnover of key personnel | | | |
| *When group began to decline or continued to decline* | Late 1980s and 1990s; shell of a group by late 1990s; split in 2004 after Butler's death | Group split in 2002–2003 | Group has not declined and is still rising | Members arrested in 1995 |

Notes. AWC = Aryan World Congress. PEN1 = Public Enemy Number 1. OCM = Oklahoma Constitutional Militia.

The OCM never had a strong leader or funds. It was able to maintain some stability because it consisted of only four people who shared the same values. Lampley did not need much money to achieve his goals, but he was not a sophisticated leader. He embarked on his plan soon after the Oklahoma City bombing, at which time militias were being heavily scrutinized by law enforcement. Lampley was indiscreet in discussing his plans. The group's cohesion was effectively undermined by their trusting of a law-enforcement informant, which led to a quick end to the OCM. Conversely, PEN1 has remained unified with a small cohesive leadership. Indeed, as mentioned previously, this is one reason it is attractive to the Aryan Brotherhood. Furthermore, PEN1 has consistently embraced both white supremacy and profit crimes for more than 20 years and thus far has managed to avoid crippling internal disputes.

The results from previous organizational and terrorism studies are consistent with our findings. Scholars explaining the decline of organizations have concluded: "Declining organizations

are characterized by a wide range of dysfunctional organizational processes. These outcomes of decline erode organizational effectiveness and undermine member satisfaction and commitment" (Whetten, 1987: 345). Similarly, losing the support of one's base is associated with a terrorist group's decline (Chermak, 2002; Crothers, 2003; Dugan, Huang, LaFree, and McCauley, 2008; Hewitt, 2003; McAdam, 1999; Ross and Gurr, 1989; Sageman, 2008).

*Responses to group (by government and nongovernment agencies)*. A group's descent also may be encouraged by outside forces, which include the government and nonstate actors. All the groups engaged in (or attempted to engage in) serious acts of violence and each of them provoked a response. Table 6 makes this point. The Aryan Nations benefited from the violent crimes committed by groups like The Order. These crimes raised the Aryan Nations' status and helped recruit new members. But it drew the attention of law enforcement, which arrested most members of the criminal groups that supported the Aryan Nations. Law enforcement also focused on the Aryan Nations. This attention affected attendance at the AWC and created paranoia within the group as to who was a true member and who was an undercover agent— which contributed to the instability of the group. In addition, the $6.3 million civil lawsuit won by the Southern Poverty Law Center on behalf of the Keenans bankrupted Butler and the Aryan Nations. The Aryan Nations was already struggling financially and organizationally, yet major splits occurred after the lawsuit. Although the National Alliance's undoing is primarily attributable to itself, recall that the Southern Poverty Law Center published tapes from a secret meeting in which Pierce insulted other white supremacists. The tapes angered many in the movement and resulted in a boycott of Resistance Records, which reduced the sales and profitability of the organization. Law enforcement also kept the National Alliance destabilized. In 2006 after Gliebe appointed Shaun Walker as the group's new chairman, law enforcement arrested Walker for previous civil rights violations and he was convicted. Kevin Strom, who was another key leader, was arrested for nonmovement crimes. The constant change of leadership added to the instability of the organization. Similarly, successful law-enforcement tactics led to the complete end of the OCM: All four members of the organization were identified by law enforcement.

However, PEN1's frequent interactions with the law have not hampered their growth; instead, it seems that prison actually has helped the group grow. As already discussed, PEN1 shrewdly took advantage of the opportunities inside prison—protecting white inmates, collaborating with the Brotherhood to commit profit crimes, and expanding.

Previous studies have found that responses by both state and nonstate actors contribute to the decline of terrorist or extremist groups. Jones and Libicki's (2008) study that examined 268 terrorist groups worldwide found that 40% of organizations ended because local law-enforcement and intelligence agencies arrested or eliminated key members. Smith (1994: 91; see also Hamm, 1993) concluded that skinhead groups declined in the United States in the 1980s because of a "double barreled blast of aggressive federal criminal prosecutions and private civil rights attorneys," and Hamm (2007a) reached similar conclusions about the demise of

the Arizona Patriots (see also Crothers, 2003; Hewitt, 2003; Horschem, 1991; Kaplan, 1996; McAdam, 1999; Ruggiero, 2005). Such responses, although contributing to declines in these groups, also may have had unintended consequences and created backlash effects. These concerns are addressed in the next section.

### T A B L E   6

### Responses to groups

| | Aryan Nations | National Alliance | PEN1 | OCM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Critical factors responsible for group's decline or continued decline and year each occurred* | Law-enforcement infiltration increased suspicion and paranoia among group's members<br><br>Arrested members of The Order and other "below ground" groups inspired by Aryan Nations<br><br>Southern Poverty Law Center civil suit crippled Aryan Nations (2000) | Southern Poverty Law Center publicized tapes of Pierce mocking others in the movement—led to boycott of NA companies (2002)<br><br>Arrests of key figures (e.g., Walker, Strom) | Despite imprisonment of its leadership, it has thrived both inside and outside prison<br><br>Political opportunities inside prison seem to transcend enforcement efforts | Successful law-enforcement tactics led to arrest of group with help from a police informant (1995) |
| *When group began to decline or continued to decline* | Late 1980s and 1990s; shell of a group by late 1990s; split in 2004 after Butler's death | Split in 2002–2003 | Group has not declined and is still rising | Members arrested in 1995 |

Notes. PEN1 = Public Enemy Number 1. OCM = Oklahoma Constitutional Militia.

### Policy Implications and Conclusion

Our findings have many policy implications. The rise and fall of white supremacist organizations are linked to critical events and organizational variables that enhance or disrupt groups. These findings suggest the importance of law-enforcement intelligence and analysis. Understanding these organizations is like hitting a moving target and analysts must engage in dynamic analyses (Freilich et al., in press; Sageman, 2008; Smith, 1994). Changes in the factors outlined above may cause a group to increase or decrease in strength and potential to commit violent acts. For example, the militia movement was affected dramatically by the Oklahoma City bombing, which forced many individuals to leave the movement, others to join, and some to go underground or to seek other extremist organizations for fear of government infiltration (Chermak, 2002). Paying attention to such changes will allow law enforcement to (1) assess a group's threat level more accurately as it changes; (2) differentiate between truly dangerous groups and less dangerous groups, as well as immediate versus potential future threats; and (3) develop policies that best address these threats (Chermak et al., in press; Duffy and Brantley, 1998; McGarrell, Freilich, and Chermak, 2007).

It seems obvious that successful law-enforcement operations can eliminate a group or individuals that have engaged in crimes (e.g., Kahl, who murdered three police agents, and Mathews, who was the leader of The Order, were killed during separate firefights with law enforcement; remaining members of The Order and the OCM were tracked down and arrested by the authorities). This thought seems to bolster deterrence and incapacitation views that call for harsh responses to extremist groups. Many watch groups call for firm government actions against extremist organizations (Chermak, 2002; Freilich, 2003). However, our findings also demonstrate that some responses may have unintended consequences. Perceived harsh government and police actions may lead to consciousness raising (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997; McAdam, 1982) that outrages the wider movement and causes a backlash. Other extremist groups and the movement at large may grow and individuals and groups may become even more radicalized and turn to violence. For example, the Aryan Nations capitalized on the killings of Kahl and Matthews by law enforcement and the organization's popularity increased. In addition, Matthews partially created The Order because of anger over Kahl's death. The National Alliance, the militia movement, and other far-right groups grew in response to government excesses at Waco and Ruby Ridge. Importantly, recent research also suggests that harsh government responses to terrorism often have no deterrent effect and sometimes lead to a backlash (Kaplan, 1996; Jones and Libicki, 2008; LaFree, Dugan, and Korte, in press; McCauley, 2006; Pridemore and Freilich, 2007; Sageman, 2008; Silke, 2008).

Authorities must strike a balance between a carefully calibrated campaign that eliminates dangerous groups and which stresses that violence will not be tolerated on the one hand, and responses that avoid outraging and possibly increasing crime from the larger movement on the other hand. Several options must be considered. First, law enforcement should use deadly or harsh responses only as a last resort. Again, severe government actions at Waco and Ruby Ridge had a backlash effect. Conversely, the Anti-Defamation League (2003; see also Wright, 2007) explained that nuanced and patient responses by law enforcement that allow militia extremists to save face can yield peaceful resolutions, such as the Republic of Texas standoff in 1997.

Second, the government should consider supplementing harsh law-enforcement actions against violent groups with "outreach" programs to nonviolent wings of the movement. These strategies should encourage members of the movement to forsake illegal behaviors in favor of participation in the political system or other legal activities. Jones and Libicki's (2008) study found that 43% of 268 terrorist groups worldwide ended because of a transition to the political process. Significantly, FBI agents charged with monitoring domestic extremists have made similar arguments. Agents Duffy and Brantley (1998) created a typology of four categories of far-right militia groups that range from noncriminal entities to organizations, that conduct serious crimes (e.g., homicide, bombings). These authors urged local police to open a dialogue with leaders from the two nonviolent categories "so that the two sides can voice their concerns and discuss relevant issues in a non-confrontational way" (p. 2).

These strategies should be used today, especially when law enforcement is involved in a crackdown. What makes this initiative difficult is that the ideology of far-right racist groups is explicitly antigovernment and calls for violence against nonwhites, Jews, and the government. However, outreach policies could extend law-enforcement efforts to build bridges in immigrant communities that are suspicious of the government (Freilich and Chermak, in press). Newman and Clarke (2008) recently identified steps that police agencies can take to reduce tension with migrant communities that have come under suspicion because a few terrorists—such as the 9/11 hijackers—used them to fit in. These steps include assigning community police agents to work solely with migrant communities, taking advantage of ethnic media outlets to communicate with the larger community, and clearly publicizing the police agency's mission and policies. Similar strategies could be taken with "moderate" members of racist groups and other far rightists. In addition to following Duffy and Brantley's (1998) suggestion of initiating dialogue with nonviolent groups, agencies can assign officers to appear on far-right media outlets (many racist groups make use of short-wave radio shows and the Internet). Such campaigns could explain the government response and note that it is directed only at those who commit crimes. Authorities could reassure noncriminal members of the movement that their rights will be protected and encourage them to focus on lawful activities while stressing that violence will not be tolerated.

Although we recognize that some hard-core terrorists have no interest in pursuing change through legitimate processes, it is also true that most extremist individuals and groups do not engage in violence or terrorism themselves. Furthermore, some "terrorists" are reluctant participants and are not strongly committed to an extremist ideology. McGarrell et al. (2007) discussed how most of the individuals linked to a series of bombings and detained terrorists (nearly 70%) were not ideologically committed. We also recognize that the goals of racist, far-right groups are beyond the pale to most. But our study shows that the ideology of these groups plays a role in their growth. Effective antiextremist strategies should challenge the ideology of racist groups and refute their points (Berlet and Lyons, 2000; Freilich, 2003). Part of the reason that civil lawsuits against these organizations brought by watch groups have been successful is that they focus on violent actions by committed movement members. Successful judgments handicap the organizations financially and send a message that violent tactics will not be tolerated. Consistent with our earlier discussion, it is important that watch groups avoid taking actions that harshly target the nonviolent wing of the movement. Like crime-control authorities, watch groups need to balance necessary responses to illegal acts against severe actions that outrage the larger movement and create backlash effects. It is important that future research on deterrent and backlash effects also examines the role of nonstate actors, such as watch groups, the media, and others (Pridemore and Freilich, 2007). Finally, backlash effects are usually found when a government takes action *after* a crime or terrorist act has been committed. Strategies that prevent the crimes these groups commit to raise funds and advance their objectives (e.g., by using situational crime prevention; Clarke and Newman, 2006; Freilich and Newman, in

press; Hamm, 2007a; Jones and Libicki, 2008; Newman and Clarke, 2008) may preempt the harsh police responses to these crimes and thus avoid possible backlash effects.

Our analysis of PEN1 raises challenges for both terrorism scholarship and government responses to such groups. PEN1 adheres to an extremist ideology, but its primary concern is its continued existence as a gang that focuses on profit crimes. Law enforcement should be wary of PEN1 transitioning from nonideological routine crimes to a full-fledged ideological criminal organization (Simi et al., 2008). It is important for authorities to remember that many terrorist groups commit a wide range of criminal activities to fund and prepare for significant terrorist activities (Hamm, 2007a; Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts, 2006). Finally, terrorism scholarship has struggled with defining terrorism (Freilich et al., in press; Schmid and Jongman, 1988). However, it may be valuable to focus on all criminal and terrorist activities of such groups and to compare the characteristics of organizations that commit terrorists acts with groups that do not, as well as with groups that commit only nonideological crimes or ideological crimes that are *not* terrorism (e.g., tax refusal; Freilich and Chermak, 2008). This could expand our theoretical explanations for group differences and help law enforcement establish priorities for responding to and preventing future terrorist activities.

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**Joshua D. Freilich,** is an associate professor in the Criminal Justice Department at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He is a lead investigator for the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a Center for Excellence of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Freilich's research has been funded by DHS directly as well as through START. He is the principal investigator (with Steven Chermak) on the United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) study, a large-scale data-collection effort that is building the first-of-its-kind relational database of all crimes committed by far-right extremists in the United States from 1990 to the present reported in an open source.

**Steven M. Chermak,** is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. He is a lead investigator for the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a Center of Excellence of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Chermak's research interests include identifying effective strategies for reducing crime and violence, policing, domestic terrorism, and media coverage of crime and justice. His current research projects include an examination of the criminal activities of far-right extremists and a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) sponsored project to examine the intelligence practices of state, local, and tribal law-enforcement agencies.

**David Caspi** is a doctoral student in the criminal justice program at The Graduate Center, CUNY, housed at John Jay College. His research interests include studying extremist ideology and the acts carried out in furtherance of that ideology. Caspi is completing his doctoral dissertation, which involves using social network analysis methodology to study the structure and interconnectedness of domestic white supremacist groups.